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THREE EMPERORS

I

NAPOLEON AFTER THE BATTLE OF AUSTERLITZ (1805)

By TOLSTOI

ON the Pratzer hill, in the same spot where he had fallen with the flagstaff in his hand, lay Prince Andrei Bolkonsky, bleeding and unconsciously groaning. Toward evening he ceased to groan, and lay absolutely still. But he did not know how long his unconsciousness continued. It was suddenly he felt that he was alive and suffering from a burning and tormenting pain in his head.

"Where is that lofty heaven which I had never seen before, and which I saw today?" was his first mental query. "I never knew such pain as this," he said to himself. "I have never known anything, anything at all, till now. But where am I?"

He tried to listen, heard the trampling hoofs of several horses approaching, the sounds of voices, talking French. Then he opened his eyes. Over him stretched the same lofty heaven, with clouds sailing over it in even loftier heights, and beyond them depths of endless blue. He did not turn his head or look at those who, to judge from the hoof beats of the horses and the sounds of the voices, rode up to him and paused.

They were Napoleon, accompanied by two aides. Bonaparte, who had been riding over the field of battle, had given orders to strengthen the battery

that was cannonading the dyke of August, and was now looking after the killed and wounded left on the battlefield.

"Handsome men!" he said, gazing at a Russian grenadier, who lay on his belly with his face half buried in the soil, and his neck turning blue-black, and one arm flung out and stiffened in death.

"The ammunition for the field-guns is exhausted, sire!"

"Have that of the reserves brought." Then a step or two nearer, he paused over Prince Andrei, who lay on his back with the flagstaff clutched in his hands, the flag having been carried off by the French as a trophy.

"What a handsome corpse!" exclaimed Napoleon, gazing at Bolkonsky. Prince Andrei realized that this was said of him, and that it was spoken by Napoleon. He heard them address the speaker as "sire." But he heard these words as though they had been the buzzing of a fly. He was not interested in them; they made no impression upon him; he immediately forgot them. His head throbbed as with fire; he felt that his life-blood was ebbing, and he still saw far above him the distant, eternal heavens. He knew that this was Napoleon, his hero; but at this moment, Napoleon seemed to him merely

a small, insignificant man in comparison with that lofty, infinite heaven, with the clouds flying over it. It was a matter of utter indifference to him who stood looking down upon him, or what was said about him at that moment. He was merely conscious of a feeling of joy that people had come to him, and of a desire for these people to give him assistance and bring him back to life which seemed to him so beautiful, because he understood it so differently now. He collected all his strength to move and make some sound. He managed to move his leg slightly and uttered a weak, feeble, sickly moan that stirred pity even in himself.

"Ah! he is alive!" said Napoleon. "Take up this young man and convey him to the temporary hospital." Having given this order, Napoleon rode on to meet Marshal Lannes, who, removing his hat and smiling, rode up and congratulated him on the victory.

Prince Andrei recalled nothing further; he lost consciousness of the terrible pain caused by those who placed him on the stretcher, and by the jolting as he was carried along, and the probing of the wound. He recovered it again only at the very end of the day, as he was carried to the hospital together with other Russians wounded and taken prisoner. At this time, he felt a little fresher and was able to glance around and even to speak.

The first words which he heard after he came to were spoken by a French officer in charge of the convoy.

"We must stop here. The emperor is coming by immediately. It will give him pleasure to see the prisoners."

"There are so many prisoners today, almost the whole Russian army,

I should think it would have become an old story," said another officer.

"Well, at all events, this man here, they say, was the commander of all the Emperor Alexander's Guards," and the first speaker indicated a wounded Russian officer in a white Horse-guards uniform. Bolkonsky recognized Prince Repnin whom he had met in Petersburg society. Next him was a youth of nineteen, an officer of the cavalry guard also wounded.

Bonaparte coming up at a gallop reined in his horse.

"Who is the chief officer here?" he asked, looking at the wounded.

They pointed to Colonel Prince Repnin.

"Were you the commander of the Emperor Alexander's Horse-guard regiment?" asked Napoleon.

"I commanded a squadron," replied Repnin.

"Your regiment did its duty with honor," remarked Napoleon.

"Praise from a great commander is the highest reward that a soldier can have," said Repnin.

"It is with pleasure that I give it to you," replied Napoleon. "Who is this young man next you?"

Prince Repnin named Lieutenant Sukhtelen.

Napoleon glanced at him and said with a smile, "He is very young to oppose us."

"Youth does not prevent one from being brave," replied Sukhtelen in a broken voice.

"A beautiful answer," said Napoleon. "Young man, you will get on in the world."

Prince Andrei who had been placed also in the front rank, under the eyes

of the emperor, so as to swell the number of those who had been taken prisoner, naturally attracted his attention. Napoleon evidently remembered having seen him on the field.

"Well, and you, young man?" said he addressing him. "How do you feel, *mon brave*?"

Although five minutes before this, Prince Andrei had been able to say a few words to the soldiers who were bearing him, now he fixed his eyes directly on Napoleon, but had nothing to say. To him at this moment all the interests occupying Napoleon seemed so petty, his former hero himself, with his small vanity and delight in the victory, seemed so sordid in comparison with that high, true, and just heaven which he had seen and learned to understand; and that was why he could not answer him.

Yes, and everything seemed to him so profitless and insignificant in comparison with that stern and majestic

train of thought induced in his mind by his lapsing strength, as his blood ebbed away, by his suffering and the near expectation of death. As Prince Andrei looked into Napoleon's eyes, he thought of the insignificance of majesty, of the insignificance of life, the meaning of which no one could understand, and of the still greater insignificance of death, the thought of which no one could among men understand or explain.

The emperor, without waiting for any answer, turned away, and as he started to ride on, said to one of the officers—

"Have these gentlemen looked after and conveyed to my bivouac; have Doctor Larrey himself look after their wounds. *Au revoir*, Prince Repnin," and he touched the spurs to his horse and galloped away.

His face was bright with self-satisfaction and happiness.

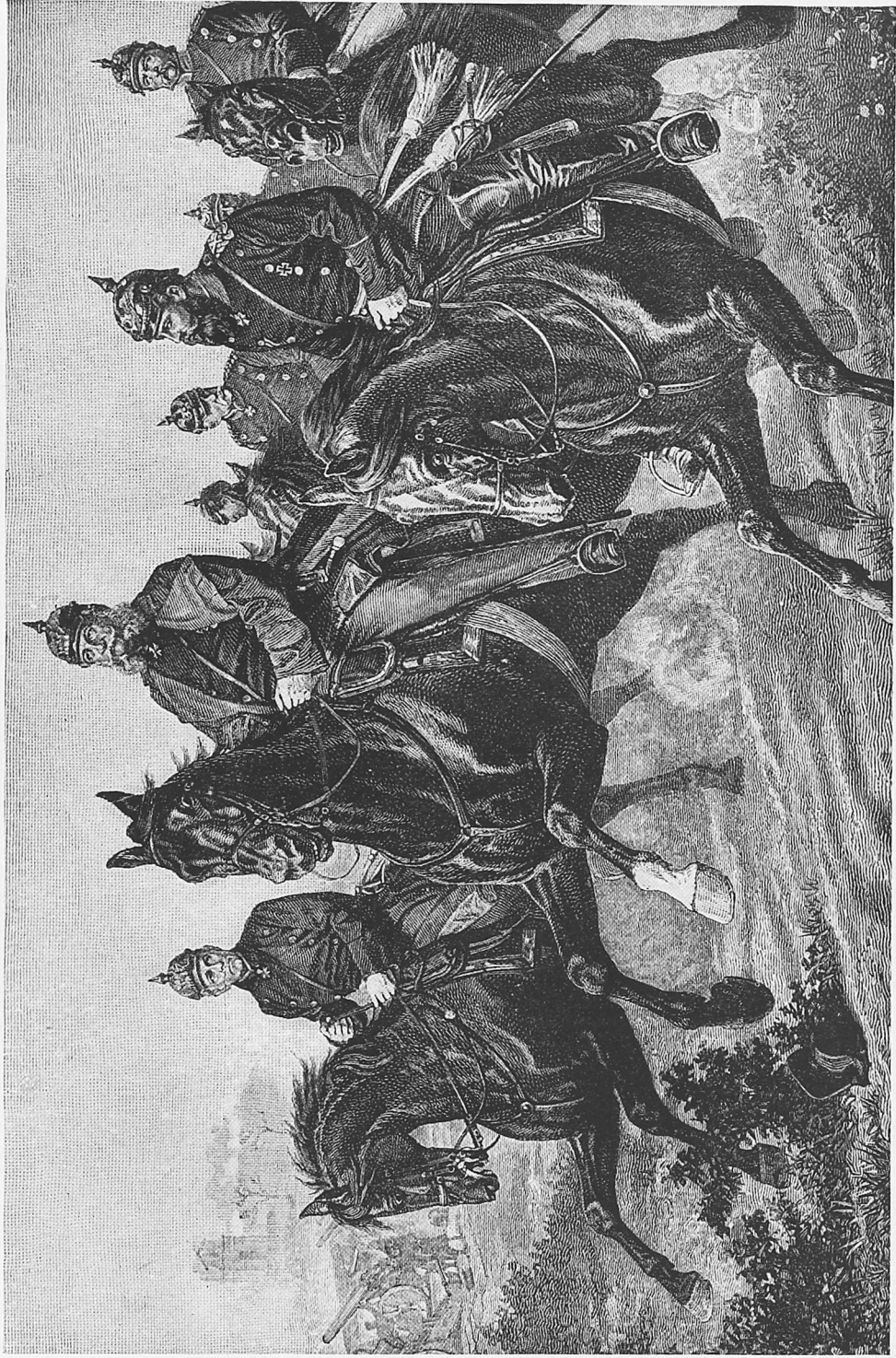
II

KING WILLIAM OF PRUSSIA, AFTERWARDS GERMAN EMPEROR, AT THE
BATTLE OF SEDAN. (SEPTEMBER, 1870.)

By ZOLA

THOSE who were up there on la Marfée were King William and his staff. By seven o'clock he had ridden up from Vendresse, where he had had quarters for the night. At his feet lay the valley of the Meuse and the great panorama of the field of battle. Far as the eye could reach, from north to south, the bird's-eye view extended, and standing on the summit of the hill, as from his throne in some colossal opera box, the monarch surveyed the scene.

In the central foreground, standing out in bold relief against the venerable forests of the Ardennes that stretched away on either hand from right to left, filling the northern horizon like a curtain of dark verdure, was the city of Sedan, with the geometrical lines and angles of its fortifications, protected on the south and west by the flooded meadows and the river. In Bazeilles houses were already burning, and the dark cloud of war hung heavy over the



Von Moltke

EMPEROR WILLIAM I

Crown Prince Frederick

Bismarck

charming village. Turning his eyes eastward he might discover, holding the line between la Moncelle and Givonne, some regiments of the 12th and 1st corps, looking like diminutive insects at that distance and lost to sight at intervals in the dip of the narrow valley in which the hamlets lay concealed; and beyond that valley rose the further slope, an uninhabited, uncultivated heath, of which the pale tints made the dark green of Chevalier's Wood look black by contrast.

To the north the 7th corps was more distinctly visible in its position on the plateau of Floing, a broad belt of sere, yellow fields, sloping downward from the petit forêt of la Garenne to the verdure that bordered the stream. Further away were Floing, Saint-Menges, Fleigneux, Illy, small villages nestling in the hollows of that billowing region where the landscape was a succession of hill and dale. And there, too, to the left was the great bend of the Meuse, where the sluggish stream, shimmering like molten silver in the bright sunlight, swept lazily in a great horseshoe around the peninsula of Iges and barred the road to Mézières, leaving between its further bank and the impassable forest but one single gateway, the defile of Saint-Albert.

Here it was, in that triangular space, that the hundred thousand men and five hundred guns of the French army had now been crowded and brought to bay, and when His Prussian Majesty deigned to turn his gaze still further to the westward he might perceive another plain, the plain of Donchery, a succession of bare fields stretching away toward Briancourt, Marancourt, and Vrigne-aux-Bois, a desolate ex-

ppanse of gray waste beneath the clear blue sky; and did he turn him to the east, he again had before his eyes, facing the lines in which the French were so closely hemmed, a vast level stretch of country in which were numerous villages, first Douzy and Carignan, then more to the north Rubecourt, Pourru-aux-Bois, Francheval, Villers-Cernay, and last of all, near the frontier, Chapelle. All about him, far as he could see, the land was his; he could direct the movements of the quarter of a million of men and the eight hundred guns that constituted his army, could master at a glance every detail of the operations of his invading host. Even as he looked the XIth corps was pressing forward toward Saint-Menges, while the Vth was at Vrigne-aux-Bois, and the Würtemberg division was near Donchery, awaiting orders. This was what he beheld to the west, and if, turning to the east, he found his view obstructed in that quarter by tree-clad hills, he could picture to himself what was passing, for he had seen the XIIth corps entering the wood of Chevalier, he knew that by that time the Guards were at Villers-Cernay. There were the two arms of the great vise, the army of the Crown Prince of Prussia on the left, the army of the Prince of Saxony on the right, slowly, irresistibly closing on each other, while the two Bavarian corps were hammering away at Bazeilles.

Underneath the King's position the long line of batteries, stretching with hardly an interval from Remilly to Frénois, kept up an unintermittent fire, pouring their shells into Daigny and la Moncelle, hurtling them in shrill flight over Sedan to sweep the north-

ern plateaus. It was barely eight o'clock, and with eyes fixed on the gigantic board he directed the movements of the game, awaiting the inevitable end, calmly controlling the black cloud of men that beneath him swept, an array of pigmies, athwart the smiling landscape.

* * * * *

From among the trees that clothed the summit of la Marfée King William had just witnessed the junction of his armies. It was a fait accompli. The third army, under the leadership of his son, the Crown Prince, advancing by way of Saint-Menges and Fleigneux, had possession of the plateau of Illy, while the fourth, commanded by the Crown Prince of Saxony, turning the wood of la Garenne and, coming up through Givonne and Daigny, had reached its appointed rendezvous. There, too, the XIth and Vth corps had joined hands with the XIIth corps and the Guards. The gallant but ineffectual charge of Margueritte's division in its supreme effort to break through the hostile lines at the very moment when the circle was being rounded out had elicited from the king the exclamation: "Ah, the brave fellows!"

Now the great movement, inexorable as fate, the details of which had been arranged with mathematical precision, was complete. The jaws of the vise had closed. Stretching on either hand, far in the distance, a mighty wall of adamant surrounding the army of the French, were the countless men and guns that called him master. At the north the contracting lines kept up a constantly increasing pressure on the vanquished, forcing them back upon Sedan under the pitiless fire of bat-

teries that lined the horizon in an array without a break. Toward the south, at Bazeilles, where the conflict had ceased to rage and the scene was one of mournful desolation, great clouds of smoke were rising from the ruins of what had once been happy homes, while the Bavarians, now masters of Balan, had advanced their batteries to within three hundred yards of the city gates. And the other batteries, those posted on the left bank at Pont Maugis, Noyers, Frénois, Wadelincourt, completing the impenetrable rampart of flame and bringing it around to the sovereign's feet on his right, that had been spouting fire uninterruptedly for nearly twelve hours, now thundered more loudly still.

But King William, to grant his weary eyes a moment's rest, dropped his glass to his side and continued his observations with unassisted vision. The sun was slanting downward to the woods on his left, about to set in a sky where there was not a cloud, and the golden light that lay upon the landscape was so transcendently clear and limpid that the most insignificant objects stood out with startling distinctness. Seen from that height, with the sun's parting kiss resting on it, the horrible battlefield, with its blood and smoke, became an exquisite and highly finished miniature, where, notwithstanding the burning of Bazeilles, the slaughter of Illy, the anguish of Sedan, impassive nature yet could don her gayest robe and put on her brightest smile as the perfect day faded into the tranquil evening.

Suddenly there was descried a French officer climbing the steep path up the flank of La Marfée. It was General



EMPEROR WILLIAM II OF GERMANY

“You have sharpened and swung the great sword”

Reille, mounted on a black horse and preceded by a hussar bearing a white flag. General Reille wore a blue tunic. He was unarmed and merely carried a riding whip. Reining up his charger, he dismounted at ten paces from the King, then advanced and delivered to him a letter. It was a communication entrusted to him by the Emperor, Napoléon III, to be delivered to the King of Prussia:—

“My brother, as it has been denied me to die at the head of my army, all

that is left me is to surrender my sword to Your Majesty. I am Your Majesty's affectionate brother, Napoléon.”

The sun was setting in a flood of rosy light; the King seated himself on a chair in the midst of a grassy open space, and resting his hand on the back of another chair that was held in place by a secretary, replied that he accepted the sword and would await the appearance of an officer empowered to settle the terms of the capitulation.

III

KAISER WILHELM II, AFTER THE BATTLE OF CHARLEROI. (AUGUST, 1914)

FROM the battlefield the Kaiser sent this telegram to his daughter-in-law, the Crown-Princess Cecilie:—

“I thank thee with all my heart, dear child; I rejoice with thee over the first victory of Wilhelm. God has been on his side and has most brilliantly supported him. To Him be thanks and honor. I remit to Wilhelm the Iron Cross of the second and first class.

“Oskar also fought brilliantly with his grenadiers. He has received the Iron Cross of the second class. Repeat that to Ina and Marie. God protect and succor my boys. Also in the future, God be with thee and all wives.

“PAPA WILHELM.”

The telegram refers to the victory won by the army of the Crown Prince,

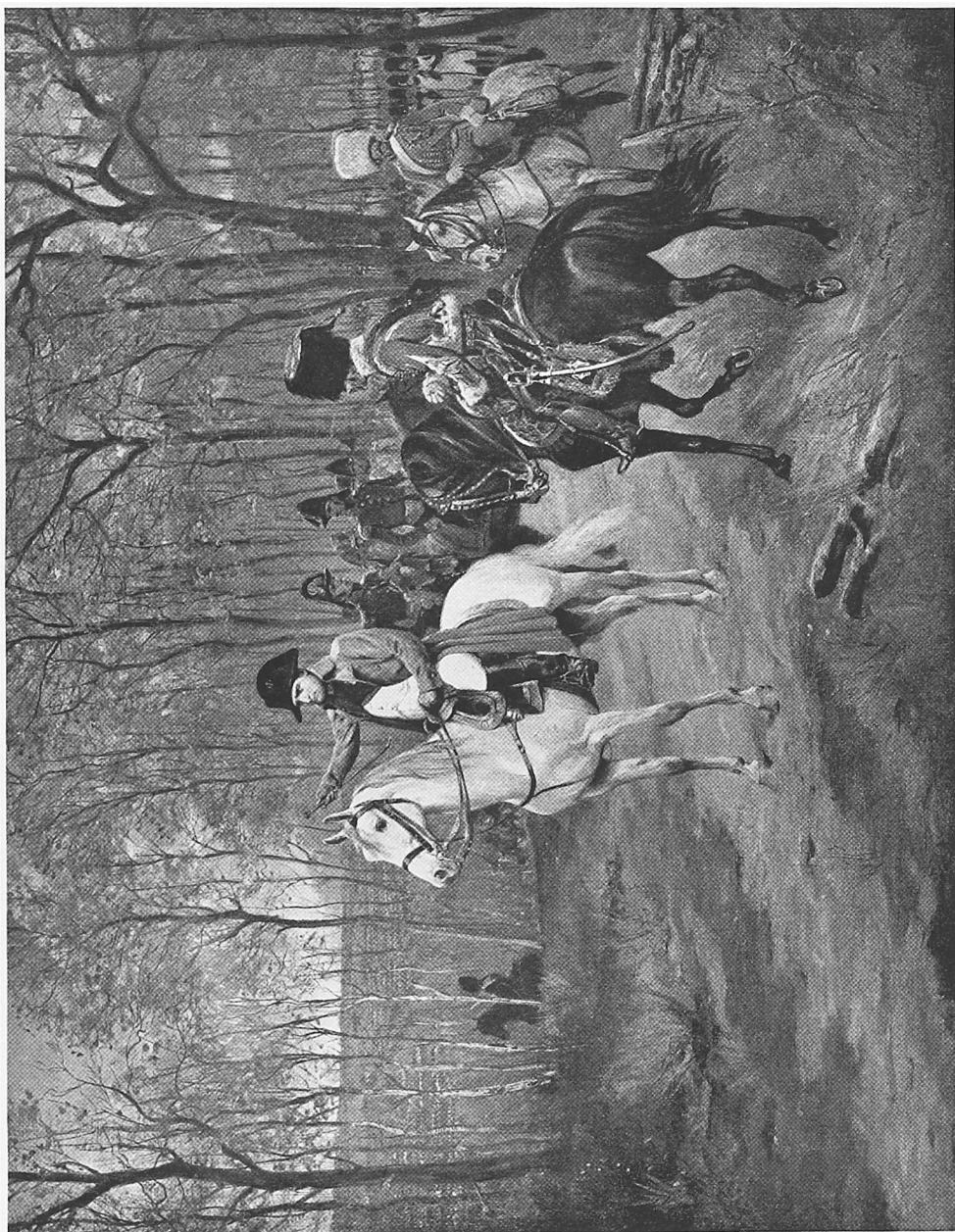
Friederich Wilhelm. Oskar is another son of the Kaiser.

To the Kaiser, the Emperor Franz Josef, of Austria, sent the following telegram:

“The splendid victories gained by the German armies under your command over your powerful enemies are due to your iron will. To the laurels which adorn you as victor I should like to add the highest military honor which it is in my power to confer by asking you to accept the Grand Cross of Maria Theresa.

“Knowing how highly you and your army value the achievements of Gen. von Moltke, I bestow upon him the Commander's Cross of the Maria Theresa Order.

“You have sharpened and swung the mighty sword.”



NAPOLEON
By Desvarreux